

COVID-19: Children, young people and families

December 2020 Evidence Summary

Key messages

This briefing is the fifth in a series of evidence summaries on the impact of COVID-19 on the wellbeing of children and families in Scotland, drawing on wider UK and international research where appropriate. As with previous briefings, the scope is fairly broad to cover a wide range of policy interests. This month, there are some new Scottish studies on how children and young people are feeling since returning to school, as well as new research exploring the experiences of 'seldom heard from' young people, and survey research on the prevalence of online bullying during lockdown. A summary of key messages is set out below.

- The emerging picture on the reopening of schools/childcare in Scotland appears to be a positive one for many children and families. There are some **signs of recovery** with indicative evidence of improvements in children's emotional wellbeing, loneliness and peer and family relationships, particularly for younger age groups (Children's Parliament research). Other positive findings include an increase in outdoor activities and, for some, improvements in physical health and wellbeing (Lockdown Lowdown research). A parent survey found that most respondents felt school is going well for their children (although nearly a third did not feel as positive) (Connect parent survey). However, as these findings are based on unrepresentative samples they cannot be generalised to the wider population and caution should therefore be exercised in interpreting these findings. There are some positive signs in wider UK evidence too, with the most recent Public Health England report on population mental health and wellbeing suggesting that there is increasing evidence that many children and young people are coping well overall and some have reported benefits for their mental health.
- However, emerging evidence on child **mental wellbeing** in Scotland shows that for some children, particularly for older children and young people, significant issues remain. For example, in the latest Lockdown Lowdown survey only four in ten respondents (aged 11-25) said that they felt good about their mental health and wellbeing. A number of studies, including the Lockdown Lowdown and Children's Parliament research (and various UK studies) report significant **anxiety** – about COVID-itself (particularly in relation to family health), family income, exam pressure and employment prospects.

Another common source of worry was a surplus of online information and misinformation about COVID-19.

- Wider UK evidence is consistent with this mixed picture. Public Health England's updated report on population mental health suggests that **experiences vary by children and young people's characteristics**, with those from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic backgrounds, those with existing mental health conditions, those with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities, and those living in low income families more likely to have been negatively affected than other children and young people. This is reflected in a number of studies covered in this briefing (e.g. EBPU review, Co-SPACE study, Kindred report) with new evidence suggesting that mental health may be worsening for some groups since returning to school (Young Minds survey).
- A recurring theme is the need for **more 'recovery' support** e.g. in schools and childcare settings, particularly for child mental wellbeing. There is some indication that support for older children and young people in school/further education has been insufficient – particularly for those with 'vulnerabilities' such as young carers, young people with mental health problems and those with experience of the criminal justice system (Lockdown Lowdown research). Another group of concern are children who have experienced domestic abuse during the pandemic, with a recent Scottish Government report citing concerns from service providers about children missing out on vital recovery work since returning to school.
- Whilst most Scottish evidence suggests a general level of satisfaction with the safe reopening of schools/childcare, there is a feeling from some young people that more could be done to enforce or increase **safety measures in schools**. Participants in the Lockdown Lowdown research voiced concerns about others not complying with COVID-19 guidance (thereby putting vulnerable family members at risk) and difficulties in complying with physical distancing in schools. Disabled participants that were hard of hearing or partially sighted found that the 2 metre requirement made it hard for them to hear/see others.
- Although **social media** is generally perceived by young people to be a positive means of keeping in touch with friends (although less so for young people with mental health problems and disabilities) (Lockdown Lowdown research), there continues to be emerging evidence around increased levels of **online bullying** during the national lockdown. One recent Scottish survey reported an increase in online bullying, prejudicial comments and attitudes online during lockdown (Time for Inclusive Education (TIE) Scotland).

Evidence of concerns about **online safety** continues to emerge, with the Children's Parliament most recent survey reporting an increase in the proportion of children feeling unsafe online.

- We continue to see evidence of the **strain placed on parents** and the impact that this can have on parenting and child wellbeing. Public Health Scotland (PHS) research and other international evidence (e.g. UNICEF's 'Beyond Masks' report) draws links between children's and parents' emotional wellbeing. The PHS survey findings report that children of parents experiencing low mental wellbeing showed a bigger decline across all child behaviours/areas of life. A loss in income was associated with poor mental health and wellbeing in parents. This is reflected in UK evidence, with the Royal Foundation survey reporting that parents were less positive about their own wellbeing than their children's, particularly women and those experiencing financial difficulties. The UNICEF report suggests that parents most at risk of stress are likely to include families living in poverty, those experiencing conflict, those lacking support from other adults and parents who are key workers.
- That said, there is evidence of positive impacts of the pandemic on family relationships. A new report by LSE (London School of Economics) using UK-wide data from the Understanding Society Covid Survey suggests that the pandemic has not had a detrimental impact on the relationship between children and their non-resident parent. An Ofsted report on children's experiences during the pandemic found that children's sources of **resilience** (e.g. good support structures, quality family time) played a key role in determining how well children are coping since returning to school regardless of background, including those within the care system.

A number of findings from Scotland and the UK have emerged about how different **sub-groups of young people** are experiencing the return to school/college/work, as well as new evidence on their experiences during the pandemic more generally:

- **Young carers** - Emerging evidence suggests that since returning to school/college some young carers in Scotland are finding it even more difficult than during lockdown to find time to relax and 'take a break', with some reporting a drop in support over time (Lockdown Lowdown research).
- **LGBTQ+ young people** - A Scottish survey on online bullying reported that LGBTQ+ respondents were experiencing online bullying during the national lockdown at more than double the rate of their heterosexual peers. They also reported significantly higher rates of negative mental wellbeing and lower emotional wellbeing before and during the national lockdown (Time for Inclusive Education Scotland research).

- **‘Shielding’ children and families** - New Scottish research by Kindred on the experiences of ‘shielding’ families whose children have complex medical needs reveals the toll that the pandemic has taken, with many families surveyed struggling to cope and having to weigh up the health risks to their children and the needs of other family members. Key issues reported included loss of respite care, sleep deprivation and the crucial role that schools normally play in supporting parents. Confusion around Scottish Government information (although most thought it was ‘good’/‘adequate’) and eligibility for hubs was also raised. Evidence from England suggests an increase in home schooling, which is reported to be driven by fears about the virus (Ofsted COVID-19 series & Association of Directors of Children’s Services Home Education Survey).
- **Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) young people** - Further evidence on the experiences of BME young people in Scotland, which indicates a need for more consideration of the interests of minority cultures, is emerging. The Lockdown Lowdown research reported that young BME people felt that the way restrictions were re-introduced during Eid celebrations showed a lack of regard for minority cultures. Young people highlighted the need for tailored communications aimed at BME communities, more resources to be available in community languages, and more explicit statements from government countering misinformation and recognising the different situations of minority ethnic groups. UK evidence continues to highlight the disproportionate impact of the pandemic on BME people, particularly in terms of income and mental health, but also domestic abuse (UCL Covid-19 Social Study, YouGov Debt Tracker).
- **Poverty** - PHS survey findings show that the biggest decline in young children’s emotional wellbeing and behaviours during lockdown was seen in children from low income families (compared to higher income families), single parent families (compared to two-parent households), and for children with a long term health condition or whose parents have a long term health condition. A recent UK-wide YouGov poll for Action for Children found that many families are in receipt of benefits for the first time, with the cost of Christmas adding to their anxiety and financial burden.
- **Care experienced young people** - Research by the Dartington Trust reports an improvement in relationships at home for some young people in foster care in the UK. Findings were mixed in relation to the experience of virtual family time, virtual social care, home-schooling and wellbeing, with some thriving due to the one-to-one support from carers, and others missing the structure of school and relationships with friends and family.

Access to services and evidence-based responses

- PHS survey findings shows that some families – often those most in need – had **difficulties in accessing universal services** during lockdown e.g. GPs and health visiting. This included families on low incomes, single parent families and parents with long-term health conditions. However, the opposite was true for family support, early learning childcare and school staff, which were more readily accessed by these groups.
- As reported in previous briefings, there is a call from some groups of young people to **continue online service delivery** such as online health appointments (e.g. from young people with experience of the criminal justice system and young people with disabilities) (Lockdown Lowdown research).
- An international evidence review by UNICEF on the societal impacts of COVID-19 reports that the **most effective evidence-based responses** are social protection (especially financial measures and nutrition), parenting programmes, mental health support and education. There is also increasing evidence of the essential role of community-based service delivery during the pandemic. Other evidence-based responses include further development of telephone and online family support programmes, and (online) storytelling which can help alleviate children's stress (UNICEF's 'Beyond Masks' report).
- Other approaches to support the mental wellbeing of children and young people identified in an evidence review by the EBPU (Evidence-Based Practice Unit) include outdoor access and optimal housing conditions (especially for young people with ADHD and epilepsy), online counselling, access to healthy activities, and upskilling/education of parents and teachers on signs of difficulties and available support.

Evidence Gaps

We continue to see the evidence base on the impacts of COVID-19 on children and families grow. In the short term, it is important to monitor how children and families are adapting to changes in restrictions – particularly those groups that the changes impact most on e.g. 'shielding' families, low income families, young carers – and to identify the most effective responses to meeting those needs. As noted previously, the extent and impact of COVID-related bereavement – and other adverse childhood experiences – needs to be better understood. Looking ahead, there is the continued need for more longitudinal research using representative samples to monitor the impact of the pandemic in the longer term, particularly for the disadvantaged sub-groups covered in this briefing and the digitally excluded.

Research Topics

Please use this contents page to view your particular area of interest.

COVID-19: Children, young people and families	1
December 2020 Evidence Summary	1
Key messages	1
Scottish Evidence	8
1. General children, young people and parent/carer COVID-19 evidence and research	8
2. Impact on families	20
3. Mental health and mental wellbeing	20
4. Physical health and wellbeing	22
5. Education, learning and employment.....	22
6. Children's rights and participation	23
7. Children and young people with vulnerabilities and/or disadvantage	24
7.1 Poverty	24
7.2 Children, young people and families impacted by disability and serious health conditions	25
7.3 Care experienced children and young people	27
7.4 Young carers	27
7.5 Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) children and young people	28
7.6 Vulnerable children and young people	29
7.7 Domestic abuse and violence against women and girls	29
7.8 LGBTQ and non-binary children and young people	30
7.9 Children and young people impacted by the Justice system	30
8. Impact on services	31
UK and international Research	34
9. General children, young people and parent/carer COVID-19 evidence and research	34
10. Impact on families	38
11. Mental health and mental wellbeing	41
12. Physical health and wellbeing	47
13. Education, learning and employment.....	47
14. Children's rights and participation	48
15. Children and young people with vulnerabilities and/or disadvantage	48

15.1	Poverty	48
15.2	Children, young people and families impacted by disability and serious health conditions	50
15.3	Care experienced children and young people	51
15.4	Young carers	52
15.5	Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) children and young people	52
15.6	Vulnerable children and young people	55
15.7	Domestic abuse and violence against women and girls	55
15.8	LGBTQ+ and non-binary children and young people	56
15.9	Children and young people impacted by the justice system	57
16.	Impact on services	57
17.	Scope, limitations and further information	58

NOTE - Many of the COVID-19 surveys are drawn from self-selecting or convenience/opportunity samples (a sample that a participant volunteers to be part of rather than being selected to join). This means that the findings are likely to be biased in some way, and are not representative of, and cannot be generalised to, the wider population. Results of individual studies should therefore be interpreted with caution.

This briefing covers a broad range of policy interests but focuses predominantly on social and emotional impacts of COVID-19 on children and young people aged 3-18, with a particular interest in children and families experiencing vulnerabilities, disadvantage or discrimination.

Further information about the scope and limitations of this evidence briefing are covered in the Scope, Limitations and Further Information section.

Scottish Evidence

1. General children, young people and parent/carer COVID-19 evidence and research

[Listen and Act – 15 Stories – Engaging with the views and experience of families with younger children during the COVID-19 pandemic](#)

Source: Children's Parliament

Date: November 2020

Children's Parliament was commissioned by the Scottish Government to engage with children aged 3-7 and their parents/carers to seek their views and experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic. This work was designed to gain insight into the lived experience from a broad range of families including those from vulnerable groups. A total of 15 families were involved in this qualitative research which used artwork and online interviews and which took place in September 2020. Key findings are summarised below:

- The reopening of early learning centres (ELC) and schools was identified by all families as the most positive thing to happen since the start of the pandemic. Parents and children are largely happy with the procedures in place to mitigate Covid transmission risks, although there were varying levels of school/ELC communications.
- Parents' biggest concern is further nursery or school closures which they felt would take them and their children back to a period of isolation – from friends, family and learning.
- The closure of parks and play areas in the early months of lockdown, along with closing down organised play and sporting activities, had a profound impact on children. Parents welcomed the increased emphasis on outdoor learning and play since ELCs and schools reopened:

“But we don't have a garden, and the parks were shut for the first while, but we could play in a field. The police were patrolling anyone who stopped to play, and there was a lot of anxiety about the police talking to people. Friends of mine got stopped by them for playing football with their five-year-old, and for sitting on a picnic blanket. Also going out in a public space was quite stressful. Especially where we live, it's so densely populated. People were getting quite angry with children in public.” (Marion's story)

- The financial impact of the pandemic was a common theme. The cost of food, the effects of unemployment, lost income and the cost of return to school were all been identified by parents as issues.

- The impact on children's behaviour was also raised, with parents seeking a professional-parent partnership in understanding children's behaviours free of judgement.
- Other key issues raised were the social isolation experienced by lone parents and difficulties experienced by co-parents (i.e. where a child lives in two homes).
- There was a feeling from some families that (statutory) services took too long to adapt and respond during lockdown, whilst community (often third sector) services were quicker to support families in need. The importance of having key workers that parents trust and they know to be authentic in their care and respect was also emphasised.

[A website with all 15 stories has been created](#) which displays some of the children's artwork and parent's stories.

[How are you doing? A report on the findings from the How are you doing? Survey](#)

Source: Children's Parliament

Date: November 2020

This is the fourth and final report on the How are you doing? online survey series for 8-14 year olds in Scotland. This report compares results from surveys conducted in April (4000 responses), May (3698 responses) and June (2810 responses) to results from the most recent survey in September/October (1969 responses). Whilst it is helpful to make such comparisons, as all the surveys were open to anyone aged 8-14, there will inevitably be variation in the respondents (sample) of each survey which make drawing robust conclusions about change over time problematic. Additionally, as this was an open survey, findings cannot be treated as representative of young people in Scotland. Key findings were:

Signs of recovery

- **Emotional wellbeing** - Post-lockdown children surveyed were more likely to agree that they generally felt cheerful and in a good mood (64%); the largest increase in positive responses came from the 12 to 14 year olds.
- **Loneliness** - There were significant improvements when it comes to children reporting that they often feel lonely (from 26% to 20%). This was particularly so for the group of children who had reported highest levels of loneliness during lockdown i.e. girls aged 12 to 14 (from 34% to 20%).
- **Friendships** - Respondents reported positively about their friends and responses indicate a strengthening of peer relationships in the post-lockdown period which has seen children return to school. Post-lockdown, children pointed to friends as the most likely thing to help them to feel better.

- **Family relationships** - The vast majority of children who responded enjoyed being with their family (93%) and reported that their family gets along well together. A larger proportion of respondents post-lockdown strongly agreed with this statement.
- **Meaningful activities** - Post-lockdown children reported that they had more fun things to do in their day, they felt less bored and they were more likely to say that when they do something, they try their hardest.
- **Physical health** - A majority and consistent percentage of children surveyed indicated – in lockdown and post lockdown – that they thought they made healthy choices, with a shift post-lockdown toward a strongly agree response. Boys of all ages and older girls aged 12 to 14, reported that having returned to school they thought they got enough exercise (but this was not the case for younger girls – see below).

Areas of concern

- **Online safety** - The move to digital platforms for learning and peer relationships has been accompanied by an increase in the number of respondents reporting that they are less likely to feel safe online (this echoes findings from other research referenced in previous briefings). The biggest increase was seen in girls aged 8-11 (8% reported feeling unsafe online in the most recent survey).
- **Family income** - Nearly 1 in 3 children (29%) continued to report that their parents or carers worry about having enough money. As time has gone on, younger children reported this concern in increased numbers.
- **Anxiety and worry** – Overall, rates of worry across a range of topics including school work and ‘the future’ remained constant and, in the case of child and family health, money problems and exams, increased post-lockdown. Girls aged 12 to 14 consistently reported the highest levels of agreement that ‘there are lots of things they worry about in their life’, whilst children aged 8 to 11 were more likely to report worrying about multiple areas than in previous surveys.
- **Resilience in younger age groups** – Despite overall improvements in mood, in terms of children feeling that even if they are having a difficult time they feel they will be okay, there was a decline in positive responses post- lockdown for all children but particularly for older girls and 8 to 11 year olds.
- **Access to health information/services** - When responding to the statement ‘If I have a question about my health I know who to speak to’, children were less likely to agree than in previous survey – this was particularly so for 8 to 11 year olds.
- **Participation** - The survey reported a reduction of 10 percentage points on children responding positively to the statement post lockdown ‘I feel like my rights are respected by others’.

Lockdown Lowdown: A survey of young people in Scotland about their 'new normal' lives as lockdown restrictions change

Source: Scottish Youth Parliament/YouthLink/ Young Scot

Date: 7 December 2020

This online survey follows on from the initial Lockdown Lowdown survey which was carried out in April. It ran between 28th September and 2nd November 2020 and received 6,043 responses from young people aged 11-25 across Scotland. As this was an open survey, findings cannot be treated as representative of young people in Scotland. Most survey respondents were aged under 18 and around six in ten were female. Key findings included:

Impact of coronavirus on education

- Around three quarters (76%) of young people in education (including FE/HE) had returned to in-person learning. Of those who had returned, around three quarters were happy with the arrangements for their educational course, over two thirds (67%) agreed that they were happy to be back, and almost two thirds (63%) agreed that their educational establishment had re-opened in a safe way.
- When respondents were asked if they would like anything altered about the current arrangements, the most common suggestions were to enforce or increase safety measures, a preference for in-person and blended learning, and suggestions for altering the structure of the school week. Respondents also mentioned that students were not receiving adequate support.

Impact of coronavirus on relationships

- The majority of respondents agreed that they currently have a good relationship with their family (83%) and friends (84%).
- Impact of coronavirus on their relationships discussed in open questions were around the inability to see friends and family, difficulties with keeping in contact and the negative impact of reduced socialising on mental health.

Impact of coronavirus on employment

- The majority of respondents who were in employment had experienced a change in their employment due to COVID-19. For those in part time employment, the most common impacts were reduced hours (41%); being furloughed (38%) and a change to working conditions (26%). For those in full time employment, the most common impacts were a change in working conditions (54%); being furloughed (38%); and a reduction in hours (22%).
- Substantial percentages of respondents had concerns around their employments. Those in full time employment were slightly more positive, with 60% saying they felt good about their current employment situation, and 43% that they felt good about their future employment prospects. Among those in

part time employment, 53% felt good about their current employment situation, and 34% felt good about their future employment prospects.

- When asked if they had any further thoughts on the impact of coronavirus on their relationships, the most common concerns were around future job prospects, employment levels in the UK and competition with adults for jobs. There were also concerns regarding the link between the impact in education and future employment prospects.

Impact of coronavirus on health

- Six in ten respondents felt good about their physical health and wellbeing, but only four in ten felt good about their mental health and wellbeing.
- In terms of concerns around the health impact of COVID-19, 45% were concerned about catching coronavirus, 71% were concerned about a second wave of coronavirus and 64% of respondents were concerned about transmitting coronavirus to others.

Access to information and understanding of restrictions

- When asked about their knowledge of the current coronavirus restrictions, the most common response was 'I know what the rules are in general, but I'm not sure on all the details' (54%). Only 3% stated that they did not know what the current rules were.
- The topics that young people felt most confident in accessing information about were information and updates or advice about the current coronavirus restrictions. The topic that young people felt least confident accessing information about was financial support.
- When asked if there were any topics that respondents would like more information about, the most common requests were information and support for mental health and wellbeing, clear reliable and accessible statistics about the virus itself and information on schools, education and exams.

Lockdown Lowdown: The Voice of Seldom Heard Groups During COVID-19 Pandemic Report

Source: Scottish Youth Parliament/YouthLink/ Young Scot

Date: 7 December 2020

This report presents findings from focus groups with targeted groups of young people that were carried out alongside the Lockdown Lowdown wave 2 survey in October and November 2020. The groups were as follows:

- Young people from Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic (BME) communities
- Young people with disabilities and additional support needs
- Care experienced young people
- Young people with experience of the criminal justice system
- Young carers

Findings from the cross-cutting themes across all groups are presented below. Findings relating to particular groups are presented in the relevant section of this briefing.

Theme 1 - School, learning and employment

- Most young people in school were glad to be back in education. Some participants said that they had fallen behind less than they expected to, while others felt that many young people had fallen behind during lockdown, including their younger siblings. Access to and familiarity with technology was cited as a key reason for this.
- There was no particular concern raised about not sitting exams, but many participants noted the pressure from increased levels of coursework. This was an issue particularly for young carers. There was also a feeling from some participants that there was a lack of communication and clarity on how the coursework based assessment model worked.
- For young people in further or higher education, experiences of online teaching was mostly negative. The lack of social contact, lack of motivation and uncertainty around how courses with practical elements would work were all mentioned. One young carer found that their increased caring responsibilities were not sufficiently considered.
- Young people who had been in employment had mixed experiences. Some had lost their jobs or been furloughed which was impacting their finances and they felt very uncertain about the availability of job opportunities in the future. However, for one participant the pandemic had a positive impact in terms of voluntary work and influencing government policy. For some young people, the pandemic had provided an opportunity to reassess their future plans, while others felt that their plans were now delayed or impossible.
- Most participants that needed it were provided with a device and data to be able to access their education, although some reported having had to get into debt to buy a laptop and some did not have enough data to be able to access all their learning activities. There was a strong preference for more face-to-face learning if that was possible.

Theme 2 - Relationships and friends

- For many participants, spending more time with their family during lockdown was a positive experience, providing a chance to relax, although at the same time many noted that it was stressful to be in a small space with a number of people trying to work and/or learn, which led to arguments.
- While most participants had been able to stay in touch with their friendship groups during lockdown and while physical distancing restrictions are in place, there was a feeling of social isolation for some, particularly for those with partners they were unable to see. Being unable to celebrate special events like birthdays and Eid in big groups was highlighted as a problem, although for

one disabled participant, cultural events such as concerts moving online made them more accessible.

Theme 3 - Space

- Most participants said that they felt they had used outside space more than ever before and increased their physical activity levels, which was perceived as a positive. However, some participants were shielding or family members were shielding, so their experience of outdoor space was limited.
- Sharing indoor space and being around their family all the time had proved difficult as many did not have sufficient space for work or study.

Theme 4 - Perceptions of COVID-19 restrictions

- Participants agreed with social distancing, although found it difficult to comply in schools and when socialising with friends in public. Some reported their friendship groups not adhering to physical distancing. Disabled participants that were hard of hearing or partially sighted found that the 2 metre requirement made it hard for them to hear/see others. However, a participant with autism, found the increased personal space beneficial.
- The majority of participants agreed that face coverings should be worn in public and participants did not feel that wearing face coverings had a negative impact on them. The only concern around face coverings raised was from a young carer, who felt that others were not wearing face coverings when required or not wearing them correctly, making them feel unsafe due to the impact that this might have on their family.
- Young people were appreciative of mitigation measures taken in educational establishments. Young people that had an exemption from face coverings found that this was managed well through lanyards, although one participant had witnessed an incident where an individual with an exemption lanyard was stigmatised by another passenger on public transport.
- One place where many young people felt that mitigation measures and physical distancing was not adequately enforced was public transport.

Theme 5 - Social media

- Young people found social media useful for staying in touch with their friends and found that it helped reduce or remove social isolation or loneliness. However, for some social media was not a sufficient substitute for face-to-face contact, and felt that messaging had made their relationships less close. This was particularly the case for some young people with mental health issues or disabilities that make it difficult for them to read tone in messages. For some disabled participants, having to learn how to use assistive technology was a barrier.
- There was a high level of recognition of the widespread misinformation circulating on social media. Some participants felt they had spent too much time on their phone and that this had increased their existing mental health concerns.

Theme 6 – Mental health, wellbeing, support

- For many young people, the lockdown and current restrictions has made existing mental health concerns more pronounced, due to lack of time with friends and increased social media use, as noted above. Some disabled young people felt that new technologies others were using to keep in touch were not always accessible to them, increasing anxiety, stress and feelings of isolation.
- Spending time outdoors and with family and on hobbies were seen as factors that helped improve young people's mental health. One participant felt that their body image improved in the context of the pandemic and another felt more able to express their non-binary identity.
- Young people appreciated the support they were receiving from teachers and third sector organisations. Care experienced young people found the increased continuity in their support team during lockdown beneficial. Some participants in higher and further education and participants with mental health issues did not feel that they were given sufficient individualised support, and found a general lack of timely services. Some also struggled with online modes of delivery and would prefer face-to-face contact.

Theme 7 – Information

- The majority of participants said that they received information directly from the Scottish Government briefings or the BBC news website. Some participants mentioned getting information from social media, however, understood the risks that this information might not always be accurate. Others received information from family members. Participants from BME communities highlighted the lack of information in community languages, and some disabled participants said that more could be done to reach those that couldn't watch the daily briefings.

[COVID-19 Early Years Resilience and Impact Survey \(CEYRIS\) Report 4 – full findings](#)

Source: Public Health Scotland (PHS)

Date: 23 December 2020

PHS published three short topline reports in September which summarised the findings of their COVID-19 survey for parents of children aged 2-7 (see our October briefing for details). This report provides the full analysis of the data, including analysis by socio-demographic variables, including income, household structure, disability and parental mental health. The survey which ran from 22 Jun to 6 July received approximately 11,000 responses. The sample was self-selected and can therefore not be seen as nationally representative.

Key findings

- Children in affluent households were more likely to be doing well psychologically and behaviourally during lockdown than children in less well-off households. Children in the higher-income group were also more likely to sleep through the night, participate in home learning activities and be physically active. Although deterioration was identified across all income groups in terms of children's behaviour and life, the extent of the decline was worse for children in low-income households in all areas except physical activity.
- Parents in low-income households who wanted access to health visitor or GP services were less likely to have successfully accessed it compared with parents in high-income households. However, for services such as family support worker, nursery staff/childminder, school staff and voluntary/community organisations, the opposite was true.
- Children in two-adult households scored better on SDQ total difficulties scale (a measure of wellbeing) than children in single-adult households, although the difference was not as large as the difference by income. Children in single-parent households experienced a bigger decline in behaviour, sleep, concentration and eating than those from two-adult households, were less likely to participate in home learning activities and less likely to be physically active. However, children in single-adult households spoke to family and friends more frequently.
- A greater proportion of parents in single-adult households were unable to access the health visitor service when they needed it during lockdown. On the other hand, a greater proportion in two-adult households were unable to access a family support worker or nursery staff/childminder.
- The pattern for large families compared to smaller ones was more mixed. Children in large families had worse outcomes on some measures, but better on others.
- Children with a long-term health condition were less likely to receive a score of 'close to average' on SDQ, sleep through the night and to be able to concentrate. The decline during lockdown in relation to children's behaviour and life was more severe for children with a long-term health condition than those without.
- Children of parents with a long-term physical or mental health condition did less well than other children in relation to psychological wellbeing and behaviour during lockdown. They were also less likely to sleep through the night, and maintain normal eating behaviour. In all areas of child behaviour that were asked about in CEYRIS, the decline was worse for children whose parent has a long-term health condition than those without.
- Parents living with a long-term condition were more likely to want to access services during lockdown. However, in half of the services asked about, a

smaller proportion of these parents managed to gain access to the services when compared with other parents.

- There is a clear association between how well children were doing emotionally and how well parents were doing emotionally during the lockdown period. For all child behaviours/areas of life asked about in the survey, there was a much bigger decline for children whose parents had low mental health and wellbeing at the same time. Parents who experienced a reduction in income during lockdown were more likely to have experienced poor mental health and wellbeing during the same period.

Public Health Scotland is running a [second follow-up survey](#) for parents of children aged 2-7. This went live on 23rd Nov and is expected to report early next year.

Evidence Review: The Socio-Economic Impact of COVID-19 on Children in Scotland

Source: Data for Children Collaborative with UNICEF

Date: November 2020

This international evidence review considers the socio-economic impact of COVID-19 on children (dependent children under 18) during the first six months of the pandemic (Mar-Sep). It takes a broad approach to defining 'socio-economic' disadvantage including income, health, wellbeing and educational attainment. The review considered evidence from a range of sources including grey literature and did not apply predetermined quality criteria. The report covers four themes: restrictions on non-essential jobs and services; closure of education and childcare facilities; and adverse childhood experiences. The report notes that many of the adverse socio-economic impacts **may take years to manifest** and that this will be an important area of research for many years to come (with a detailed list of evidence gaps provided in the Annex). Key findings:

Restrictions on non-essential jobs and services

- The **Coronavirus recession** is likely to be severe with a slow recovery expected. The number of jobs expected to be lost is high. This is likely to have an impact on the level of child poverty which is known to have a wide range of harmful effects. Some families are likely to be particularly affected, including those on precarious contracts, those ineligible for support due to employment status and parents (particularly mothers).
- The impact on **career prospects** will likely be most keenly felt by young people, particularly during this recession which has impacted on many sectors that young people start their careers in.
- The reduction in **household expenditure** for some families is resulting in material deprivation which can have long lasting impacts on children's development, including on their health and educational attainment. Shorter

term impacts might include increased risk of eviction, loss of savings and impacts on mental health and disrupted family life.

- Some groups of children have faced specific challenges and have ongoing support needs that may have been reduced due to the lockdown. Groups such as disabled children, those with additional support needs, young carers, care experienced young people and those in contact with youth justice services have faced particular challenges.

Closure of education and childcare facilities

- The **loss of learning** could have long-term impacts on educational attainment and potential future income. It is likely that this will widen the attainment gap even further. Although schools have now returned in Scotland, there is likely to remain disruption for the foreseeable future, for example if children need to self-isolate. It will be some time before we know the extent to which this has affected learning.
- Schools and childcare settings are crucial for children's development of **social skills**, discipline and self-motivation. Development of these skills are known to have long-term impacts on educational attainment, employment and health outcomes. The extent to which children were able to develop these skills at home during lockdown will vary (depending on whether parents had time to spend with children, the home environment and digital access). This is likely to negatively impact on children who are already disadvantaged in other respects, such as those growing up in poverty.

Home isolation

- Concerns are raised in the report about the impact on **physical health** and in particular reduced physical activities and – for low income families – poorer diets. That said, the report notes that some studies have reported improvements in activity levels and diet. Studies have suggested there may be urban/rural differences in behaviour as well as variation depending on size and income of household.
- A range of experiences which could have a negative impact on some children's **mental health** are described, including adverse experiences that the pandemic may have triggered (e.g. bereavement), infection fear and anxiety, isolation, time spent away from friends, loss of leisure activities, the change to routines and uncertainty over the future. The stressors associated with low income can also contribute to poor mental health which we know are a key feature of this pandemic. Whilst most studies indicate an increase in mental health issues in children due to lockdown, some studies report positive findings, for example due to more time being spent with parents and relief from the absence of stressors such as bullying at school.

- **Quality of housing** impacts on children's physical and mental health. Evidence tells us that children growing up in poor quality housing have a higher risk of severe ill-health and disability, slow growth, as well as lower educational attainment and this is particularly the case for children that experience **homelessness**. For those already living in crowded and unsafe conditions, the impact on health is likely to have been exacerbated by the lockdown restrictions. Evidence has also pointed to increased exposure to the virus due to poor quality housing, in particular where there is overcrowding.

Adverse childhood experiences

- The report considers evidence on the increased risk of **adverse childhood experiences** during lockdown. There is evidence that the pandemic has increased the likelihood of ACEs occurring (e.g. loss of a parent to the virus, domestic abuse, child neglect, household substance/alcohol use, online sexual exploitation), and reduced the opportunities to mitigate ACEs by timely intervention.
- There is some evidence on the increased risk of '**complicated grief**' – where people are unable to grieve normally – and that some of the characteristics of the pandemic (e.g. not being able to say goodbye to a loved one) are risk factors for this type of grief.

The impact of COVID-19 on children and young people in Scotland: 2 to 4 year olds

Source: Public Health Scotland

Date: 25 November

This report is one of a planned series of papers by Public Health Scotland that will consider the possible positive and adverse consequences of COVID-19 on children and young people's development and wellbeing at different ages and stages of their lives. This report focuses on children aged 2 to 4 years and pulls together previously published information. It does not contain any new research.

The report concludes that COVID-19 and in particular the infection control measures, including lockdown, have had a profound impact on 2–4 year old children in Scotland. This age group sees rapid development and it is important that children are able to develop fully at each stage if they are to reach their full potential later.

The following key impacts were identified in the report:

- **Access to services** - A significant minority of parents found it difficult to access children's services during the pandemic. However, 70% of parents had indicated that they would have liked help with their children's response to COVID-19 during 'lockdown'. While some services were maintained,

especially immunisation, other services were more limited, in particular child health reviews by health visitors, access to dental services and lower use of emergency services. As need was unlikely to have dropped this suggests children were not always receiving the care they needed.

- **Service delivery** - While some services were maintained, especially immunisation, other services were more limited, in particular child health reviews by health visitors, access to dental services and lower use of emergency services. As need was unlikely to have dropped this suggests children were not always receiving the care they needed.
- **Development and wellbeing** - Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) scores for this age group showed a large decrease in those children scoring 'close to average' compared to a similar cohort of children assessed in 2019, showing that a substantial proportion of children were suffering from mental health and wellbeing difficulties during 'lockdown'.
- **Learning experiences** - At this age it is important children have the opportunity to mix with other children. This was severely curtailed during lockdown. In addition, not all children were able to access good quality outside space easily, and this was associated with household income, so active play was also curtailed for some children. However, parents saw an increase in their children's imaginative play. Children's play began to reflect their experience of COVID-19 factors such as isolation, curtailment of access to services and even death being apparent in their imaginative play.
- **Social development** - Many families saw a reduction in their income and parents often exhibited a high level of stress which would have affected the children.
- **Physical development** - Children had largely remained active in lockdown, although quality of sleep for many children had deteriorated.
- **Family environment** - Parents felt that lockdown had enabled them to maintain good relationships with their children except for a small minority who felt their relationship with their child had worsened.
- **Physical development** - Children had largely remained active in lockdown although quality of sleep for many children had deteriorated.

2. Impact on families

No new evidence to report this month.

3. Mental health and mental wellbeing

[Online in Lockdown: Wellbeing, Bullying, Prejudice \(2020\)](#)

Source: Time for Inclusive Education (TIE) Scotland

Date: 2020

This report focuses on young people in Scotland's experience of lockdown across three areas: **emotional wellbeing, online bullying, and online prejudice**. The findings report differences by gender and sexuality (LGBT+). Findings are based on data from an online survey which ran during the national lockdown and received just over 1000 responses from young people aged 12-24 across all local authorities in Scotland. 59.3% of respondents were female, and 35.7% of respondents were male. 2.9% of respondents were non-binary. The LGBT+ sample was relatively large at 35% which makes this a valuable (if not representative) source of evidence with regards to this group (see Section 7.8). The total BME responses comprised 0.9%. The key findings are summarised below:

- There was a significant difference in young people's self-reported emotional wellbeing since lockdown began, with more young people reporting that they would describe their emotional wellbeing as poor:
 - Respondents described their emotional wellbeing as negative during lockdown at a rate of 33% higher than before lockdown (a shift from 18% pre-lockdown to 51% during lockdown).
 - Boys and young men were more likely to report positive emotional wellbeing before the lockdown than girls and young women. During lockdown, the rates for both demographics are broadly similar.
- Young people generally felt supported with regards to their health and wellbeing during lockdown. That said, 42% felt less supported and over one in ten respondents (13%) had used online support services in relation to their health and wellbeing and 8% had tried to.
- 47% of respondents have seen or experienced online bullying during lockdown, and over half (57%) of these respondents reported that this had increased since lockdown.
- Young people have witnessed more prejudicial comments and attitudes online throughout the period of lockdown. These span a broad range of characteristics: with racism, homophobia, and hurtful posts related to body image and physical appearance among the most reported forms of online prejudice witnessed:
 - 59% of respondents had witnessed an increase in prejudice-based posts, comments and/or attitudes online. 45% of respondents had witnessed more racism online while 36% saw an increase in homophobia during lockdown.

- Whilst rates of online bullying was similar for boys/young men and girls/young women (25% and 23% respectively) there were differences in their experiences:
 - Boys and young men, who had seen and/or experienced online bullying during lockdown, were more likely than girls and young women to think that it had been happening more during lockdown than before.
 - The type of prejudicial comments/attitudes seen online varied by gender, with girls and young women more likely to have witnessed sexism, misogyny and body image comments, and boys/young men more likely to have seen sectarian comments.

4. Physical health and wellbeing

A number of findings from the [Children's Parliament](#) and [Lockdown Lowdown](#) research in Section 1 cover physical health, as does the [Data for Children Collaborative with UNICEF report](#).

5. Education, learning and employment

[Connect Parent/Carer Survey: Back at School](#)

Source: Connect

Date: November 2020

The latest Connect parent online survey ran from 17 Sep to 31 Oct and was completed by 572 parents across 29 local authorities. This was an open survey and the findings are not therefore representative of all parents in Scotland. The survey includes questions on communications between school and home, access to digital devices, whether children have been at school, changes in school and impacts of those changes. Key findings:

- The majority of respondents (70%) feel school is going well for their child. However, nearly a third did not feel as positive.
- 66% of respondents had not been asked about their child's learning in lockdown and 79% had not been asked about their family's experience during lockdown.
- Nearly 40% of respondents think communications from school to home could be improved or are poor.
- Parental confidence in their child's learning appears very mixed with similar proportions of respondents feeling confident and not confident.

- Just over 30% of respondents' children needed a digital device for online learning (69% did not); the picture on whether these had made been available was mixed.

The COVID-19 Education Recovery Group (CERG) publishes a weekly snapshot of COVID-19-related data for children and young people, and the local authority school-based workforce. [The most recent CERG update](#) (at the time of writing) was published on 19 November. The percentage of non-attendance openings recorded as pupils not in school for COVID-19 related reasons has increased from 2.5% on 6th Oct to 4.4% as of 17th Nov. This amounts to approximately 30,824 pupils who were not in school either all or part of the day because of COVID-19 related reasons. 78,338 children were attending a childcare setting and 2,459 had a Covid-19 related absence (based on a 52% survey response rate as of 17th Nov).

[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): Advisory Sub-Group on Education and Children's Issues - evidence on children, schools, early learning and childcare settings and transmission from COVID-19 - summary report](#)

Source: Scottish Government

Date: 18 Nov 2020

An evidence paper has been produced by the COVID-19 Advisory Sub-Group on Education and Children's Issues, looking at the risks posed by the virus to pupils and staff and the benefits to children and young people of schools remaining open. The paper suggests the rate of coronavirus-related sickness among pupils is low across Scotland, at around 0.1% of pupils at 12 November. There was no direct evidence that transmission of the virus within schools plays a significant role in driving rates of infection among children. Meanwhile the evidence suggests closing schools would present a serious risk of harm to the wellbeing of children and young people, particularly those who are vulnerable.

6. Children's rights and participation

The [Children's Parliament Survey](#) covered in Section 1 reports a reduction of 10% on children responding positively to the statement post lockdown 'I feel like my rights are respected by others'.

7. Children and young people with vulnerabilities and/or disadvantage

The next section covers evidence relating to children and young people whose circumstances may place them at increased risk of some of the negative impacts of the pandemic.

7.1 Poverty

[Children's Neighbourhoods Scotland – COVID-19](#)

Source: Children's Neighbourhoods Scotland (CNS)

Date: November 2020

Children's Neighbourhoods Scotland (CNS), the partnership between the Glasgow Centre for Population Health (GCPH) and the University of Glasgow, has published its collection of resources exploring the impact of COVID-19 on families, children and young people across Glasgow communities. The resources include an in-depth research report and 3 complementary focused briefing papers on: family wellbeing, local services responses and collaboration. We have previously reported on the insight papers as they have become available. Building on this, CNS will soon publish reports sharing the perspectives of frontline workers who supported vulnerable refugee, asylum seeker and migrant families during the COVID-19 lockdown, and also families living in rural communities.

[COVID-19 Glasgow Research Briefing: Family Wellbeing in Glasgow](#)

Source: Children's Neighbourhoods Scotland

Date: September 2020.

This briefing focusses on learning in relation to family wellbeing during and after lockdown. The aim of the overall research was to examine service responses to the COVID-19 virus pandemic and the experiences of families, children and young people living in high poverty settings.

Key points and recommendations included:

- There has been a rapid increase in the number of people receiving welfare benefits across Glasgow and there are concerns that many of these new families in poverty are not known to public services. They will need support in the short-term to access and navigate public services and outreach to connect to the support available.
- The interlinked nature of different stressors on families has been highlighted by this crisis. Financial insecurity, furlough and unemployment, coupled with home schooling, the pressures of childcare, and the uncertainty over schools

reopening and availability of childcare has added to the anxiety felt by parents.

- Without action to provide direct support to those experiencing poverty and disadvantage, social, economic and health inequalities are likely to be exacerbated. Agile and collaborative service deployment will be needed to support this. A blended approach, that continues to include digital platforms, will be required over the longer term.
- The length of social isolation may have long-term effects on mental health and wellbeing. Service professionals are concerned about the need to support families to reconnect with their communities, services and other key workers.
- Providing support for wellbeing-focused activities delivered by trusted local organisations could support mental wellbeing and reduce pressure on statutory services.

7.2 Children, young people and families impacted by disability and serious health conditions

Lockdown Lowdown: The Voice of Seldom Heard Groups During COVID19 Pandemic Report

Source: SYP/YouthLink/ Young Scot

Date: 8 December 2020

This report presents – as described in [section 1](#) – findings from focus groups with targeted groups of young people that were carried out in October and November 2020. Additional findings specific to children with disabilities are set out below:

- Participants in this focus group said they had noticed a difference in GP services and that any specialist services they have appointments with had been cancelled or moved online. Many participants were positive about having the option of online appointments and would like to see this maintained.
- All participants agreed with the statement that “current rules and restrictions are the right balance between protecting vulnerable/previously shielding individuals, and allowing some freedom”. When asked if there were any situations where they felt unsafe, many participants talked about situations where they were around lots of people.

Covid-19 and Families of Children with Complex Medical Needs (Shielding)

Source: Kindred

Date: October, 2020

This report is based on a small-scale mixed methods research study of **families' experiences of shielding**. 42 parents of children who meet the CEN criteria (Children with Exceptional Healthcare Needs) responded to the survey, of whom sixteen participated in a telephone interview. The survey and interviews were conducted during August 2020 when most respondents were shielding. The CEN criteria cover children with severe impairment who are ventilated or tube-fed. The key findings are set out below:

- **Impact of the pandemic** - The pandemic has had a significant negative impact on the lives of those surveyed, with many parents struggling to cope physically and mentally at the time of the survey (August). The impact on siblings was also highlighted, with some parents speaking of the trauma which brothers and sisters had experienced, as well as the active role many siblings have played as 'young carers'. The lived experience of shielding for some families has been very challenging with many having to weigh up the risks to their children and other family members:

"My mother died of Covid. It was so awful having to decide whether to visit her or not and I couldn't. I am still struggling with this."

"We have to balance physical health with Emily's mental health. We keep Sam at home and let Emily go to school and shield them from each other."

- **Communication and information on shielding** - Whilst information from the Scottish Government was felt by most to be 'good' or 'adequate', some felt it was confusing owing to its complexity and volume. Shielding letters caused unintended stress for some, with some respondents anxious about not getting a letter, while others did not want the constraints of receiving a letter. Parents found it very helpful to discuss their circumstances and decision-making with health, education and social care professionals, and it is suggested that future shielding decisions may be best made by parents and professionals on a case by case basis.
- **Loss of support** - The survey revealed that over a third of parents surveyed received no respite care before the pandemic. This increased to sixty per cent after the start of the pandemic. This research highlights the importance of schools in supporting parents. A key issue highlighted was parental sleep deprivation and the impact this could have on the quality of care. Other issues were maintaining physio and home schooling. Parents also commented on the confusion around whether their children would get a place in a school 'Hub' in the early months of the pandemic and the lack of clear guidance on who might be eligible for these places.
- **Sources of resilience** - Family support, having a garden and community support were identified as helping families cope.

- **The future** - Parents are reported to be anxious about the future, children returning to school and the potential for a second lockdown. The more detailed responses from the interviews show that parents are ready to think things through and weigh up the risks.

Key recommendations in relation to the pandemic include:

- The impact of the pandemic on families of children with complex needs and serious medical conditions needs to be publicly acknowledged. This could be achieved with a statement from Scottish Government and a letter to families.
- Scottish Government should consider whether the decision to shield should be given to parents and key professionals, rather than issue further shielding letters in the event of a second lockdown.
- The needs of families for respite should be taken into consideration with regard to special schools. Scottish Government should consider whether to keep special schools open in the event of a second lockdown and to provide additional resource to enable this to happen.
- Siblings should be prioritised for support from school Hubs in the event of a second lockdown. Charities should be supported to provide activities and support for young carers.
- On the basis of this evidence, the charity is also calling for parents of disabled children to be prioritised for the COVID-19 vaccine.

7.3 Care experienced children and young people

Lockdown Lowdown: The Voice of Seldom Heard Groups During COVID-19 Pandemic Report

Source: Scottish Youth Parliament/YouthLink/ Young Scot

Date: 8 December 2020

This report presents – as described in [section 1](#) – findings from focus groups with targeted groups of young people that were carried out October and November 2020:

- Many care experienced young people found the move to online delivery of support services difficult and were hoping to have face to face contact again soon. Some reported a break in services leaving them without support and one participant's move to adult services had been put on hold.

7.4 Young carers

Lockdown Lowdown: The Voice of Seldom Heard Groups During COVID19 Pandemic Report

Source: Scottish Youth Parliament/YouthLink/ Young Scot

Date: 8 December 2020

This report presents – as described in [section 1](#) – findings from focus groups with targeted groups of young people that were carried out in October and November 2020.

- Young carers responded to say that things were good initially, however contact in some cases has stopped more recently. The focus group members said COVID-19 has changed their roles and that it has been difficult to access other support for the person they care for.
- All participants said how hard it was to take a break at the moment, and it was easier when they were at home during lockdown. Now that schools have returned it is harder to take a break. Another participant said that the restrictions have made it harder to see friends and get out of the house.

7.5 Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) children and young people

Lockdown Lowdown: The Voice of Seldom Heard Groups During COVID-19 Pandemic Report

Source: Scottish Youth Parliament/YouthLink/ Young Scot

Date: 8 December 2020

This report presents – as described in [section 1](#) – findings from focus groups with targeted groups of young people that were carried out in October and November 2020:

- While most participants did not report feeling discriminated against personally, some had witnessed discrimination based on the perceived association between COVID-19 and different communities. There was a strong feeling that the way restrictions were brought back during EID (Eid-ul-Adha) celebrations showed that minority cultures have not been recognised during the COVID pandemic.
- Many participants recognised the increased COVID-19 risk to black people, and explained this in terms of over-representation of BME people in service industry jobs which are higher risk and the lack of confidence of some ethnic minorities in navigating the health system, which was seen as treating black people differently by some young people. Young people highlighted the need for tailored communications aimed at BME communities and resources in community languages, and more explicit statements from Scottish Government countering misinformation and recognising the different situation of ethnic minority groups.

7.6 Vulnerable children and young people

The Scottish Government continues to collect data on vulnerable children (and adults) from local authorities and Police Scotland on a weekly basis. [View the weekly Scottish Government data charts on vulnerable children and adults.](#)

7.7 Domestic abuse and violence against women and girls

[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): domestic abuse and other forms of violence against women and girls during Phase 3 of Scotland's route map \(11 August – 11 October\)](#)

Source: Scottish Government

Date: 5 Nov 2020

This report presents qualitative evidence on the impact of COVID-19 restrictions on people experiencing domestic abuse and other forms of violence against women/girls. The evidence is drawn from weekly telephone interviews with service managers and practitioners from Scottish statutory and third sector organisations and documentary evidence provided by organisations during the period 11 Aug to 11 Oct. Key findings of relevance to children and families:

- In the period directly after children returned to school, specialist domestic abuse recovery services for children experienced significant challenges in providing support to children due to the Coronavirus restrictions, including challenges negotiating access to school buildings or arranging face-to-face meetings with children, particularly secondary schools. Although some services have responded by providing virtual therapeutic support during school hours, others have been unable to due to children not having access to devices and/or private spaces within school, or where devices were available the security settings did not allow calls from external agencies. Others have restricted support work to after school e.g. in outdoor spaces (although it was recognised that this was not a long-term solution).
- A number of specialist children's organisations communicated significant concerns for the 'generation' of children who had experienced domestic abuse but were currently missing out on recovery work. Explanations for this included staff feeling that virtual recovery work was not effective with children and concerns about long waiting lists to access Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS).
- Organisations reported that clients had varying experiences relating to children's' return to school. For some, the reopening of schools caused increased stress and anxiety because victims were not aware of their child's whereabouts at all times (as they had been during lockdown) whilst for others

schools' access restrictions provided reassurance to victims because the abusive parent could not gain illegitimate access to the child.

- Consistent with lockdown and previous Phases, many organisations continued to receive reports from victims regarding perpetrators extending their abuse during or via child contact.

7.8 LGBTQ and non-binary children and young people

The [TIE report on mental wellbeing, bullying and prejudice](#) described in [section 3](#) above provides some insight into the experiences and impact of the pandemic on LGBTQ+ young people, in particular their experience of online bullying and prejudice. LGBTQ+ young people survey respondents (approximately 350 young people) reported a different experience from heterosexual young people:

- LGBTQ+ youth reported experiencing online bullying during the national lockdown at more than double the rate of their heterosexual peers (36% compared to 14%). The most common form of online bullying for LGBTQ+ youth was from strangers.
- 76% of LGBTQ+ respondents reported that the online bullying they have seen and/or experienced during the lockdown period was happening more than usual (compared to 49% of heterosexual respondents)
- 72% of LGBTQ+ young people that responded have seen more prejudice online during lockdown (compared to 48% of heterosexual respondents), and they reported seeing homophobia at more than double the rate of heterosexual young people.

Other findings of note were:

- LGBTQ+ respondents reported **higher rates of negative mental wellbeing** as a result of not being in school/further education compared to heterosexual young people (53% compared to 34% respectively).
- LGBTQ+ respondents reported **lower emotional wellbeing before and during lockdown** compared to heterosexual respondents. In this survey, 26% of LGBTQ+ respondents rated their emotional wellbeing as negative before lockdown (compared to 14% of heterosexual respondents) and this rose to 69% during lockdown (compared to 40% of heterosexual respondents).
- LGBTQ+ respondents were **more than twice as likely to have used or tried to access online support services** during lockdown when compared to heterosexual respondents (32% compared to 14%).

7.9 Children and young people impacted by the Justice system

Lockdown Lowdown: The Voice of Seldom Heard Groups During COVID19 Pandemic Report

Source: Scottish Youth Parliament/YouthLink/ Young Scot
Date: 8 December 2020

This report presents – as described in [section 1](#) – findings from focus groups with targeted groups of young people that were carried out in October and November 2020:

- Participants with experience of the criminal justice system said that they found it very difficult to access services and that the main changes have been that services have moved online, which in some cases has caused a barrier to access. Young people found it difficult to gain access to government schemes that would help with access to technology.
- In terms of positive changes, some welcomed the use of online technologies and hoped that this type of engagement would not drop off.
- Regarding support for education, young people with experience of criminal justice recognised that there was more support available to pupils and students in general, but that sometimes this was at the expense of more specialist services, and found very long waiting lists.

8. Impact on services

[COVID-19 Glasgow Research Briefing: Local Service Responses](#)

Source: Children's Neighbourhoods Scotland
Date: September 2020

This briefing focuses on learning in relation to how local service providers in Glasgow have responded to the crisis. Key points and recommendations:

- The positivity, energy and 'can do' attitude of third sector organisations during this pandemic was clear. Third sector organisations adapted very quickly and provided different types of service to ensure that families were still receiving support.
- During the pandemic third sector organisations were the 'primary engagers' who provided support to children and families, often extending their service provision to other family members and other areas of the city. At the frontline they provided essential services and were quick and agile in their response to the crisis.
- Action should be taken to explore ways to resource, support and harness the local action seen during the pandemic and build grassroots agency and capacity within communities.
- Stable grant funding which was able to be used flexibly was a fundamental enabler of the COVID-19 third sector response. Learning from the faster temporary grant funding measures and the flexibility adopted under the

COVID-19 emergency response should be used to inform the development of a long-term approach to third sector funding.

- A strategic partnership is required between the public and third sector – including a shared mechanism for strategic emergency planning and a shared digital infrastructure to enable and support collaborative working.

COVID-19 Glasgow Research Briefing: Collaboration

Source: Children's Neighbourhoods Scotland

September 2020

This briefing focusses on learning in relation to the enablers and barriers to collaboration between services working in high poverty neighbourhoods in Glasgow and offers recommendations on how future collaboration can be further developed.

Key points and recommendations:

- Many third sector workers recognised the historic significance of the COVID-19 pandemic and that the response required building a new form of solidarity. Existing tensions with other organisations were set aside and organisations demonstrated what could be achieved by working together.
- Despite responsive operational partnerships working well, the potential for a cross-sectoral approach to emergency response planning and recovery was not fully realised. The third sector were not wholly recognised as providing essential public services during this emergency.
- A stronger strategic partnership is required between the public and third sector – including a shared mechanism for strategic emergency planning and a shared digital infrastructure to enable and support collaborative working.
- The key role of interface organisations in coordinating, sharing information, facilitating learning and collaboration and identifying gaps in service provision should be recognised.
- Community planning processes should be sustained and embedded as a key mechanism for multisector emergency and recovery planning.

Coronavirus (COVID-19): Supporting People at Higher Risk - Survey of Third Sector Organisations

Source: Scottish Government

Date: 24 November 2020

This research aimed to assess the extent to which third sector organisations have been supporting at-risk groups locally and how they have been doing so. The data is drawn from an online survey which ran between 21 July and 7 Aug and was completed by 530 organisations. Although the findings do not specifically relate to children's services they will be of interest to those working with third sector organisations. Key findings:

- Children and family groups supported by third sector organisations included children and young people, parents and families, carers, and survivors of domestic abuse. The most common types of support provided (to all groups as a whole) befriending and isolation support, food support, medicine support and financial support.
- A large majority of respondents (83%) believed that people at risk were effectively supported in their area. However, less than half of respondents (47%) felt that everyone in need had been reached. The main reasons for this included digital exclusion, underserved groups (e.g. disabled people, asylum seekers and refugees), funding and resource constraints, and people not asking or not knowing where to go for help.
- Greatest areas of need in relation to children and young people were concerns about vulnerable children, tense family situations during lockdown, access to services for children and young people with additional needs, and general pressures for families.
- Priorities for recovery included building confidence in return to normal life, longer-term health harms, public transport, unemployment and reprioritisation of normal services.
- Key concerns about supporting those in need as the pandemic develops included funding, volunteer numbers, staff burnout and adapting services.
- The early response of the third sector and collaborative working is emphasised.

UK and international Research

This section covers evidence that is not specific to Scotland. Many of the surveys, however, are UK-wide and include Scotland. Relevant international research including coverage of the UK is also presented.

9. General children, young people and parent/carer COVID-19 evidence and research

Ofsted: Children Hardest Hit by COVID-19 Pandemic are Regressing in Basic Skills and Learning (England)

Source: Ofsted

Date: 10 November 2020

Ofsted has today published its second report on the effects of the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic across the sectors it inspects and regulates – from early years to post 16 education. This is based on more than 900 visits to education and social care providers during September and October. Key findings:

- Ofsted's second report into the impact of the pandemic finds that children who were hardest hit by school closures and restrictions have regressed in some basic skills and learning.
- Some young children, who were previously potty-trained, have lapsed back into nappies, particularly those whose parents were unable to work flexibly.
- Older children have lost stamina in their reading and writing, some have lost physical fitness, others show **signs of mental distress, including an increase in eating disorders and self-harm.**
- Concerns remain about children who were out of sight during school closures, with falling referrals to social care teams raising fears that domestic neglect, exploitation or abuse is going undetected.
- Inspectors found children's experiences **weren't necessarily determined by privilege or deprivation.** Rather, those who are coping well have good support structures around them and have benefited from quality time spent with families and carers. This includes children from all backgrounds, including those within the care system, some of whom who saw relationships with carers improve.
- Across all age groups, children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) have been seriously affected in both their care and education, as the services that families relied on – particularly speech and language services – were unavailable.
- As with previous Ofsted reports, schools report an increase in home schooling which is reported to be driven by fears about the virus.

COVID-19 Social Study Research Updates (UK Wide)

Source: University College London (UCL)

Date: Weekly

As previously reported, weekly updates from this large survey-based study provide some interesting insights into households with children. Although the sample is large, findings cannot be generalised to the wider population as the sample is not representative.

Data from [Week 32-33](#) (published 5 Nov) and [Week 34-35](#) (published 19 Nov):

- There are widening financial inequalities within society as a result of the pandemic. Amongst people finding things financially very difficult before the pandemic, 70% are now reporting that things are even worse for them.
- Wellbeing has worsened since new restrictions were brought in in mid-September. Life satisfaction is 8% lower than it was at the start of September. Happiness levels are now 5% lower than they were before more restrictions were brought in in mid-September. Both measures, however, are higher than they were at the start of the first lockdown in April.
- Compliance with guidelines is lower in higher income households, in urban areas, and amongst **adults living with children** compared to adults not living with children.
- Depression and anxiety are still highest in young adults, people living alone, people with lower household income, **people living with children**, and people living in urban areas.
- Loneliness levels have been relatively stable in the past fortnight. Levels are still highest in younger adults, women, people from BAME backgrounds, people with lower household income, **people living with children**, people living in urban areas, and people with a diagnosed mental or physical health condition.

Beyond Masks: Societal impacts of COVID-19 and accelerated solutions for children and adolescents (International including coverage of the UK)

Source: UNICEF

Date: 30 Oct 2020

UNICEF has published a literature review on the societal impacts of the coronavirus pandemic. The report examines evidence from prior epidemics to find insights to inform the current COVID-19 crisis, and considers possible solutions for mitigating the impact. Internationally, the evidence base on the societal impacts on children is still emerging, with less evidence available in low and middle income countries in particular and a relatively low number of paediatric studies. Key findings:

General insights

- **All children are being affected** by the COVID-19 pandemic, often in multiple ways. The pandemic has massively exacerbated existing disparities, such as poverty, housing, hunger, learning, mental health distress, violence, bereavement and social isolation, and made challenges that were previously affecting smaller groups of high-risk children – such as severe parenting stressors – more widespread.
- The review identifies that the **most effective evidence-based responses** are social protection (especially financial measures and nutrition), parenting programmes, mental health support and education. There is increasing evidence of the essential role of **community-based service delivery** during the pandemic.

Health and wellbeing

- Lockdowns are likely to be associated with **increased physical inactivity** among children and adolescents, with negative consequences for their health and well-being.
- Essential **mental health services** provided through health facilities, schools and other forms directly to families and communities are central to children's well-being. Provision of support measures, including food parcels, e-Health consultations and mobile mental health support from peers, are promising interventions to support children and adolescents during the pandemic.
- Adverse mental (and potentially physical) health effects of **social isolation** are likely to be worse for specific groups of children and adolescents; these include adolescents with pre-existing mental health disorders, those who have contracted the disease and are self-isolating, adolescents in households where adults are absent (for example because caregivers have been hospitalized or are essential workers), those dependent on school lunches or other social protection through schools, and young people whose employment may be lost or suspended as a result of lockdowns.
- **What works** - based on evidence of effectiveness and acceptability, it would be useful to further develop telephone and online support and family programmes, online moderated chat-based forums, and mobile phone applications using SMS (text messaging).
- **Storytelling** and related creative activities can help. Research conducted by the United Kingdom Research Initiative's Global Challenge Research Fund (UKRI GCRF) Accelerate Hub has shown that telling stories, including online, is itself an effective outlet for children and young people when they are anxious, as in the rapidly changing and stressful situation of the pandemic.

Impact of loss of education

- The COVID-19 pandemic has caused **massive disruption to learning** and human capital development for children and young people worldwide, as well as impacting on children's wellbeing. School closures are resulting in learning loss, **heightened protection risks and mental distress**. School closures

disrupt social relationships and networks, school-based provision of other services such as food and medicines, and prevent children from accessing services available via schools such as interventions for emotional well-being and bullying. Schools can also be places of safety and security. Anecdotal evidence from previous epidemics indicates that **adolescent girls are especially vulnerable** to exploitation, child labour, child marriage, and sexual and gender-based violence.

- There is a long way to go in finding appropriate models of non-school-based learning for different contexts, countries and individual children.
- **Children living with disabilities** will require specific attention as they and their caregivers are at increased risk of the adverse effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The COVID-19 pandemic may impact on **career choices**. Anecdotal and qualitative evidence suggests that young people may shy away from traditional careers that have been heavily affected by the pandemic, at least in the short term – including hospitality, transport and tourism. Despite the barriers to evening out inequalities and digital exclusion, there are immense socioeconomic **opportunities** for adolescents in online innovative activities.

Family stress and increased risk of child neglect and abuse

- Evidence from previous natural disasters indicates an increase in **domestic and family violence** of up to 50 per cent in the post-disaster aftermath for a period of up to 12 months. However, the available evidence suggests a mixed picture. Calls to child helplines, an integral part of child protection systems, have increased in some countries, but decreased in others.
- There are evidence-based interventions to reduce violence against children during emergencies such as pandemics, conflicts or natural disasters. Many of these focus on **parenting programmes**, delivered by lay workers, which have been shown to improve parent–child relationships, decrease violent discipline, reduce caregiver stress, and improve child behaviour and child and caregiver mental health.
- **Parents are feeling the strain** in multiple ways from the pandemic, and this can impact on childcare. Research shows that families in fragile circumstances are most vulnerable to the impacts of parenting stress. In this pandemic, this cohort is likely to include families in poverty, families experiencing conflict and those lacking support from other adults. It is also likely to include families in vulnerable groups, such as refugees and undocumented populations. Parents working as essential service providers are also experiencing considerable stress and strain.
- Evidence shows that **parenting programmes** are an effective approach to improve parenting, and to reduce parental stress and violence in all settings. Systematic reviews have found remote parenting programmes to be effective in high-income settings, but further research is required to determine the

effectiveness of such schemes in low- and middle-income country contexts and in the context of COVID-19.

- Access to **safe, quality and affordable childcare** is often a vital service to help support children during the pandemic.

10. Impact on families

The [UNICEF Report](#) discussed above in Section 9 describes some of wider evidence about the impact of COVID-19 (and previous epidemics) on families.

[Action for Children YouGov poll reveals anxiety about Christmas, particularly for families with low incomes](#) (UK-wide)

Source: Action for Children

Date: 30 November 2020

A representative poll of UK parents conducted by Action for Children finds that some families, particularly those on low incomes, are anxious about Christmas this year. Data derives from a YouGov poll with a sample size of 1,060 parents of children aged 18 and under, and 1,031 children aged 6-15. Parent fieldwork was undertaken between 30th October and 4th November 2020, and with children between 30th October and 5th November 2020. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all UK parents (aged 18+), and UK children (aged 6-15). Key findings:

- Although most parents would not **choose to cancel Christmas this year** (77%), one in six (17%), and over half of children respondents (57%) think their parents will be worried about making it a happy time for their family.
- There are **many families who are in receipt of benefits for the first time**. Nearly half (46%) of parents on Universal Credit surveyed are facing their first ever Christmas on the benefit. Of these, 41% wish they could cancel Christmas this year, while more than half (55%) reported plans to delay paying household bills, borrow money or sell belongings to pay for Christmas.
- The poll reports various **mental health impacts of the pandemic**. When asked “which of these feelings have you experienced since the beginning of the Coronavirus pandemic?” almost half of children respondents (49%) reported anxiety, 38% reported fear (e.g. of getting ill, people dying), a third (33%) reported loneliness and over a quarter (26%) reported anger. This poll does not measure, however, how frequently or whether children are still experiencing these feelings. One in five (22%) parents reported their children having mood swings or panic attacks since the start of the pandemic.

- The research also included some in-depth interviews and video diaries¹ with families supported by the charity's Emergency Fund. The interviews reported that Coronavirus restrictions continue to **impact on increasing living costs**, with most families reported cutting back on essentials like food to put fuel in the car, or falling behind with household bills. Nearly every parent interviewed reported **new behaviours in their children** such as anger and fear, with some children suffering panic attacks. The pressure for many has been increased by the fact they have a new baby, an unwell child, someone in the home with a disability or because they have to shield.

COVID-19: Has the Pandemic Affected Relationships Between Children and their Non-Resident Parents?(UK-Wide)

Source: Centre for Analysis of Social Exclusion (CASE), London School of Economics

Date: September 2020

This analysis of data from the Understanding Society COVID-19 survey seeks to understand better the impact of COVID-19 on separated families where children's parents live in different households. Findings are based on data from 'resident parents' with whom children live and who also have a non-resident parent (480 respondents). Questions asked of separated parents with dependent children was included in the June online survey. The Understanding Society series of surveys are drawn from a representative UK sample. The nature of a child's relationship with their non-resident parent can impact on their well-being and outcomes, as can the financial support provided by that parent, as child maintenance. It is therefore important to understand how COVID-19 has affected these relationships. Key findings:

- Information provided by resident parents (the parent with whom the child lives most of the time) in June 2020 suggests a **strong degree of stability** in many children's relationships with their non-resident parent. This is measured in terms of the amount of contact they have, changes in the closeness of their relationship and changes in the amount of child maintenance, if any, the non-resident parent has been paying. For example, 73 per cent of resident parents report that relationships between their children and non-resident parent had not changed.
- There was for some, however, a reduction in contact in the previous four weeks – among the children who were in contact with their non-resident parent at least weekly prior to the pandemic, 31 per cent had been in contact less often during the previous four weeks. In contrast, for some children with

¹ The sample for these interviews is not known and therefore some caution should be taken in interpreting these findings.

less frequent contact with their non-resident parent before, the pandemic period has seen an increase in contact.

- By June 2020, there were some early – but small – signs that the pandemic may be affecting the child maintenance received by resident parents. Fewer than half (46 per cent) of resident parents with dependent aged children have any arrangement with the non-resident parent to receive child maintenance. Among these, one in eight (12 per cent) said they had received less maintenance in the previous four weeks than they had during the pandemic or no maintenance (87% said it was the same).
- Those relationships most at risk during the COVID-19 pandemic are those which were of poorer quality beforehand. The resident parents most likely to report a worsening of their child's relationship with their non-resident parent, or less contact, are those who were less close prior to the pandemic. Likewise, child maintenance is most likely to have reduced during the pandemic where children had less contact with their non-resident parent beforehand.

[State of the Nation: Understanding Public Attitudes to the Early Years \(UK-wide\)](#)

Source: The Royal Foundation

Date: 27 November 2020

The Royal Foundation has published findings from a study of public attitudes towards bringing up children aged up to 5 years. A follow up online survey of 1,000 parents of 0-5s in October 2020 found that parental loneliness had increased during the pandemic from 38% before to 63% during it, and there has been a rise in the proportion of parents who feel uncomfortable seeking help for how they are feeling from 18% to 34%. Other key findings of the COVID-19 survey were:

- Relatively few parents of children aged between 0 and 5 (11%) think that the COVID-19 pandemic will have a negative impact on the development of their child. Parents who do not live with a partner are particularly likely to have these concerns (17% compared with 10% who live with partner).
- Parents' key concerns relate to the lack of socialisation with other children (88%) and adults (56%) and spending too much time inside (56%).
- In contrast, 44% think that their child's brain and mind development will be better due to the pandemic, citing increased time spent learning (73%), playing (68%) and talking (65%) with their child. Notably, parents whose working hours have reduced since the start of the pandemic are more likely to think that their child's development will improve than other parents (47% compared with 40%).
- Two in five parents (37%) think that the COVID-19 pandemic will have a negative impact on their own long-term mental health. Women (40%) and those who have experienced financial difficulties during the pandemic (43%) are particularly likely to report a negative impact.

- Although increase in loneliness was widespread, it is more apparent in the most deprived areas; these parents are more than twice as likely as those living in the least deprived areas to say they feel lonely often or always (13% compared with 5%).
- Most parents (63%) report that they have been able to spend more quality time with their child over the period of the COVID-19 pandemic. The vast majority of these parents (83%) say that they are likely to continue to spend more quality time with their child in the future.
- However, this positive experience is not universal. Parents who have experienced financial difficulties during lockdown or who do not live with a partner are more likely than average to say they have spent less quality time with their child since the start of lockdown (13% and 16% respectively compared with 9% average).
- During the COVID-19 pandemic, parents were particularly likely to report that they would turn to the NHS website for information they could trust about bringing up their children (47%). The proportion of parents who said they would speak to a medical professional was in line with the nationally representative survey (41%). However, it seems there has been a rise in the proportion who feel uncomfortable seeking help for how they are feeling from 18% before the pandemic to 34% during it.

11. Mental health and mental wellbeing

[Coronavirus: Impact on Young People with Mental Health Needs - Survey 3: Autumn 2020 - Return to School](#) (UK-wide)

Source: Young Minds

Date: Autumn 2020

This report outlines the results of Young Minds' third online COVID-19 survey with young people aged 11-18 (who have recently returned to secondary school or college) with a **history of mental health needs**. 2,011 respondents completed the survey. The majority of respondents identified as female (74%), and 82% said they were White British. 8.5% of respondents were from Scotland. The data is therefore not representative. This survey was conducted 15 -30 September (the previous two ran in March and June). Key findings:

- The survey suggests that young people with pre-existing mental health problems have, for the most part, found the immediate return to school challenging. This is predominantly for three reasons: a rapid return to academic pressure; concerns about safety and social distancing measures; and difficult relationships with peers, including bullying.

- Rather than improving, **mental health problems appear to have increased** for many young people with a history of mental health needs - 58% of respondents described their mental health as poor prior to schools returning; this has risen to 69% now that they are back at school.
- When asked how they think the return to school so far has affected their mental health, 61% of survey respondents said that it has had a negative effect. 27% said it has had a positive effect.
- There is indications of **insufficient mental health support in schools**. Only 15% agreed that there was enough information and support available for their mental health at their school, while 58% disagreed. The survey reports a lack of counsellor support and wellbeing support from teachers.
- Respondents highlighted seeing friends and teachers and returning to a routine as being positive for their mental health; negative factors included renewed academic pressure, concerns about the virus, social distancing measures and reduced mental health support.
- When asked **what kind of information and support in school would help**, the top three things were 'space to take some time if things get too much', extra help with school work and mental health support from teachers.
- Whilst 60% of respondents said that there are friends in their lives that they can talk to about how they are feeling, nearly one in four (24%) reported that they **do not have friends in their lives** that they can talk to about the way they are feeling.
- The **top three concerns** about the coming months were a second wave/future lockdowns, exams and related pressure, and concerns about mental health worsening. Other concerns included adulthood, body image/appearance, bullying and/or peer pressure and having to wear face masks for a long time.

The report notes that it is too early to draw definitive conclusions about the mental health impact of returning to school. Recent evidence from Ofsted suggests that many young people in England are settling in well and happy to see friends again, while others are more tired, upset, agitated, subdued and anxious than they were previously².

[Report 06: Changes in children and young people's mental health symptoms from March to October 2020](#) (UK-wide)

Source: University of Oxford

Date: 11 Nov 2020

Oxford University's Co-SPACE (COVID-19: Supporting Parents, adolescents and Children during Epidemics) study is tracking changes to mental wellbeing over the

² [Ofsted: COVID-19 series – briefing on schools, September 2020](#)

course of the pandemic and has published its sixth report (based on non-representative survey data from over 7000 parents/carers), finding:

- That **children with special education needs** and/or neurodevelopmental differences and those from lower income household (< £16,000 p.a.) **displayed consistently elevated behavioural, emotional and restlessness/ attentional difficulties throughout the whole period (March – October).**
- Over the course of the first national lockdown (between March and June), behavioural and restless/attentional difficulties of primary school aged children increased while most children were not attending school but generally decreased from July (i.e. when home schooling demands typically reduce), throughout the summer holidays, and as children returned to school in September.
- Parents of young people of secondary school age reported more stable mental health symptoms throughout the pandemic.
- Secondary school aged girls were reported to have higher levels of emotional difficulties than boys overall, with an increase at the end of the summer (July to August) before the reopening of schools.
- Restless/attentional difficulties in secondary school aged children (11-17 year old) decreased from August to September. Overall, they were higher in secondary school aged boys than girls, especially in June.

Emerging Minds has launched a further project called the Co-RAY project ([Covid-19 response: Mental Health resources for and by Young People](#)). Working with a range of mental health organisations, this 18 month project aims to make sense of the research and support young people themselves to develop and share resources that will be helpful for other young people. The project will also share existing evidence based resources.

Emerging Evidence: Coronavirus and Children and Young People's Mental Health (Issue 4) (International)

Source: Evidence Based Practice Unit

Date: 21 Oct 2020

This the fourth in a series of evidence reviews on the impact of the pandemic on children and young people's mental health and what might help children and young people with these challenges. Key sub-groups covered include children and young people with pre-existing health and education needs, children and young people experiencing socio-economic disadvantage and social care needs, and black and minority ethnic (BME) children – the findings from this section are reported in the relevant sub-heading of this briefing. This report covers academic research and grey literature between June and July 2020 and focuses on newly emerging evidence

rather than recurrent themes covered in previous editions. Summary findings below (excerpt from report p3-4):

What are the key mental health challenges for children and young people during the pandemic?

- During the extended periods of local lockdowns and home confinement, children and young people have displayed a range of psychological distress.
- Lack of outdoor activities, poor social support, close family members contracting the virus and gender may all be contributing factors in the development of these mental health challenges.
- Other young people have been enjoying more time at home, more time and flexibility to take part in leisure activities, and developing routines at home. This also applies to some young people with Autism Spectrum Conditions (ASC) and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD).
- **Outdoor access and optimal housing conditions** may help young people manage the negative mental health effects of the pandemic, and is especially important with young people with ADHD and epilepsy.

What are the key mental health challenges for disproportionately affected groups?

- Children and young people receiving mental health care, such as for PTSD and other trauma related disorders, have experienced substantial restructuring of their support in the context of the pandemic.
- Parents and caregivers have expressed concern about the health and wellbeing of children and young people who are living with **complex health conditions** such as epilepsy and cystic fibrosis.
- The pandemic has amplified many of the existing risk factors for poor mental health in children and young people experiencing **socio-economic disadvantage**; including poor health, social isolation, uncertainty, financial stability and job loss.
- Structural inequalities are resulting in disproportionate mental health impacts for young people from **minority ethnic backgrounds** in the UK and the USA, seen in levels of anxiety, stress and sleeping difficulties and overt racial discrimination.
- **LGBTQI+** youth may be disproportionately affected by mental health challenges associated with the pandemic owing to the **loss of safe spaces** and difficulties accessing health and psychosocial support services.
- Non-binary and gender queer young people may be more likely to report high levels of PTSD symptoms and suffer losses of peer support.

What might help children and young people to manage these challenges?

- Parents and carers can support access to healthy, stimulating activities and to accurate, age appropriate health information.

- Alternative provisions, such as online counselling, are vital in providing urgent care to those who may be struggling the most during the pandemic, for example with self-harm and suicidal thoughts.
- Increasing capacity in early years and community based interventions will help identify those who may be experiencing abuses “out of sight” to virtual services.
- Efforts to upskill teachers in the mental health challenges of pupils and to reinforce referral pathways to available supports will enable school staff to signpost appropriately. Equally parents and carers should be made aware of the signs of difficulties and available support.

[‘Her whole little life has changed dramatically’ Findings of a Qualitative Study into Children’s Mental Wellbeing in Bradford during Covid-19](#) (England)

Source: The National Institute for Health Research under its Applied Research Collaboration Yorkshire and Humber

Date: 11 Nov 2020

This research is based on 43 phone and video interviews with purposefully selected families from the Born in Bradford longitudinal research cohort. Interviews were held with 21 Families (21 parents and 22 children aged 10-13) between August and September 2020, just before the majority of the children returned to school (Bradford was in local lockdown at the time). The focus of the research was on children’s mental health. Key findings:

- **COVID-19 anxiety** - Children and parents reported a moderate, sometimes high, level of health anxiety about COVID-19. Engagement with news cycle and social media worsened children’s anxieties. Children needed a lot of reassurance from parents, but parents felt confused and worried themselves. To mitigate this the report recommends easily shareable resources aimed directly at young people to help them understand the virus and the rules and mental health advice and support for parents.
- **Boredom & lethargy** - Children complained of days being boring, repetitive, lacking purpose and feeling stuck indoors, unable to do extracurricular activities. Lack of school routine, late bedtimes, long lie-ins and more time spent on devices meant some children fell into lethargy. To mitigate this the report recommends advice and ideas on age-appropriate local activities for children to do at home or outside in a socially distanced way could be collated and shared.
- **Disengagement from school** - Home-schooling was very variable and often a catalyst for arguments. Parents and children felt that not attending school had decreased children’s ability to concentrate and learn. There was a destabilising effect on children who had just transitioned or were just about to

transition to secondary school. The report recommends teachers staying in touch with pupils especially during transitions.

- **Reduced social contact** - Due to their age, social abilities and financial means, children were often cut off from contacting their friends. Virtual contact was more difficult and strange compared to face to face interaction. There was distress and unhappiness about being cut off from family that lived outside the household. To mitigate social isolation the report recommends encouraging parents to take a more active role in facilitating children's social interactions especially for younger children.
- **Positive aspects of lockdown** - Children enjoyed the opportunity to spend more time with their families. For some children with additional needs, lockdown offered a welcome respite.

Coronavirus: Mental Health and Wellbeing

Source: Public Health England

Date: 12 November 2020

Public Health England (PHE) has updated its review of population mental health and wellbeing during the coronavirus pandemic. Chapter 3 of the report covers emerging findings from English/UK studies of the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people. The findings derive from two main categories of information: weekly data drawn from the UCL COVID-19 Social Study and other sources up to week 38 of 2020 (week ending 18 September); and analysis from a range of ongoing academic research projects up to 14 August.

Important findings so far:

- There is growing indicative evidence that COVID-19 and associated interventions, such as social distancing and stay at home guidance including school closures, have likely had an adverse effect on the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people. There is also increasing evidence that many children and young people are coping well overall and some have reported benefits for their mental health.
- Loneliness has been a challenge for some children and young people, who have felt less able to cope with not being able to see their friends, compared with other aspects of life during the pandemic.
- While many children and young people have retained some access to support for their mental health during this period, a lack of access or disruption to support during the pandemic has been reported by families to be associated with worse mental health and wellbeing for some of those with existing needs.
- There are indications that these experiences may vary by children and young people's characteristics, with those from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic backgrounds, with existing mental health conditions, Special Educational

Needs and Disabilities, or living in low income families or areas more likely to have been negatively affected than other children and young people.

12. Physical health and wellbeing

No new findings to report this month.

13. Education, learning and employment

[Elective Home Education Survey 2020 \(England\)](#)

Source: Association of Directors of Children's Services

Date: 23 November 2020

The Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS) has published an analysis of its annual elective home education survey to capture the number and characteristics of children and young people who are known to be home educated in England. Estimates, based on data received from 133 local authorities who responded to the 2020 survey, include: 75,668 children and young people were being electively home educated on 1 October 2020, an increase of 38% from October 2019. Feedback from local authorities indicated that **health concerns (relating specifically to COVID-19) over the coronavirus pandemic was a primary reason for parents and carers choosing to formally home educate** their child in 2020. However, some parents or carers noted that their positive experience of educating their child at home during the partial school closures was a contributory factor. The other two top reasons for home education were 'philosophical or lifestyle choice' and 'health/emotional health'.

[School Attendance Rates across the UK since Full Reopening \(UK-wide\)](#)

Source: Education Policy Institute

Date: October 2020

Analysis from the Education Policy Institute suggests that the most disadvantaged and vulnerable pupils in the UK are more likely to have missed the most learning time as a result of the disruption to schools. The research compares data on school attendance across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland since the return of schools in August and September.

- In summary, attendance rates were highest in Scotland and Northern Ireland, with attendance rates close to that seen in a normal year and relatively low COVID-related absences, and lower in England and Wales.
- Within Scotland, the latest attendance rates are lowest in the most deprived areas (89%) and highest in the least deprived areas (95%). The authors highlight that this is a major source of concern given that evidence suggests

disadvantaged pupils are likely to have lost greater learning time during lockdown. They note that this is unlikely to be a uniquely Scottish phenomenon, with evidence of similar problems emerging for England.

- Attendance rates are generally lower in areas with higher infection rates.
- Across the UK, the schools with the lowest attendance rates are special schools.
- Where pupils cannot attend school for COVID-related reasons, the report states that it is crucial that local and national policymakers provide appropriate support, in terms of access to necessary digital equipment and remote learning materials, but also replacements for free school meals.

14. Children's rights and participation

No new evidence to report this month.

15. Children and young people with vulnerabilities and/or disadvantage

15.1 Poverty

Emerging Evidence: Coronavirus and Children and Young People's Mental Health (Issue 4) (International)

Source: Evidence Based Practice Unit

Date: 21 Oct 2020

This report – as described in Section 11 – reviewed recent evidence on the impact of the pandemic on children and young people with experiencing socio-economic disadvantage. Key findings are:

- There is increasing international evidence on the disproportionate mental health impacts (e.g. depression, anxiety, stress) experienced by children and young people from less affluent backgrounds. The quality of housing and home environment (including digital access) is thought to play a role. The report highlights the increased risk this poses to young people who occupy an increasing proportion of new social housing and who are more likely to live in damp homes than older people.
- The influence of social and economic factors on family mental health is seen in a marked increase in demand on mental health services.

Children's Food Programmes (UK)

Source: The Food Foundation

Date: October 2020

A summary from Food Foundation reports data from two surveys: a YouGov online survey of 2309 adults in households with children in the UK in August/September; an online survey of 1064 children aged 7-17 in the UK conducted by Childwise in September. Key findings include:

- 29% of children aged 8-17 are registered for Free School Meals, with 42% of these children newly registered to the scheme. 64% of the newly registered children are from households where the main earners report being in higher income occupations compared to 36% from lower income occupations.
- A further 21% of children aged 8-17, as well as 14% of parents with children not currently on the scheme, said they would like to receive Free School Meals. 8% of children said they were worried about not having enough food for lunch at school this term.
- 42% of parents with children aged 0-3 years old and/or pregnant women weren't aware of the Government's Healthy Start scheme which provides vouchers for fruit, vegetables and milk. 65% of households with pregnant women and/or children aged 0-3 years old who don't currently receive Healthy Start vouchers said it would make it easier for them to buy more milk, fruit and vegetables for their family. 32% of those say they have a limited budget for food and struggle to afford the fruit, veg and milk they need.

COVID-19 and the Impact on Low Income and Disadvantaged Families: Results from Children in Wales' August 2020 Survey

Source: Children in Wales

Date: October 2020

This report outlines findings from a survey run by Children in Wales which sought to find out how COVID-19 has impacted on low income and disadvantaged families, and to fill knowledge gaps, specifically around food insecurity; digital inclusion; and income and employment. The survey drew on a self-selecting sample so findings are not representative. The survey ran between 13 July and 10 August 2020 and received responses from a range of services (details of the sample are not known and caution should therefore be taken in interpreting the results). Key findings:

- **Food insecurity** – The vast majority of respondents reported working with families who were experiencing difficulties accessing food, who were going without food – sometimes for a whole day.
- **Digital exclusion** - Most respondents felt that digital inclusion was an issue for the children and families they work with. This included access to devices

and data availability. This was felt to have impacted on the learning of children living in disadvantaged families.

- **Income and employment** – The vast majority reported this being an issue for the families that they work with. That said, most felt that families knew where to access information regarding help available. The extra cost of food was highlighted as presenting the greatest burden to low income families.

15.2 Children, young people and families impacted by disability and serious health conditions

Emerging Evidence: Coronavirus and Children and Young People's Mental Health (Issue 4) (International)

Source: Evidence Based Practice Unit

Date: 21 Oct 2020

This report – as described in Section 11 – reviewed recent evidence on the impact of the pandemic on children and young people with existing mental health needs, autism spectrum conditions (ASC) and physical health conditions. Key findings are:

- The difficulties with routine disruption and access to specialist support for children and young people on the **autism spectrum** have been widely reported, with many families affected feeling that their needs have not been adequately responded to during the pandemic.
- Parents and caregivers have expressed concern about children and young people who are living with **complex health conditions** such as epilepsy and cystic fibrosis. For example, on study in Spain reported an increase in epileptic seizure frequency and negative behavioural impacts during the lockdown in Spain attributed to lack of outdoor space & carer's anxiety. There is some emerging international evidence that the pandemic has had a significant impact on anxiety levels of mothers of children with serious health conditions (e.g. cystic fibrosis) but the same pattern may not be seen in their children.

Oxford University's Co-SPACE (COVID-19: Supporting Parents, adolescents and Children during Epidemics) UK-wide study is tracking changes to mental wellbeing over the course of the pandemic and has published its '[Changes in children and young people's mental health symptoms from March to October 2020](#)' report which found that that children with **special education needs** and/or neurodevelopmental differences and those from **lower income household** (< £16,000 p.a.) displayed consistently elevated behavioural, emotional and restlessness/ attentional difficulties over the course of the pandemic. As noted above, this data is drawn from a non-

representative sample and cannot therefore be generalised to the UK population as a whole.

15.3 Care experienced children and young people

[Impact of COVID-19 on Care and Contact: Experiences in the first COVID-19 Lockdown on Foster Carers and Young People in their Care – Evaluation Report \(2020\)](#)

Source: Dartington Trust (Research in Practice) (UK)

Date: November 2020

Research in Practice, in collaboration with TACT (The Adolescent and Children's Trust), designed three separate surveys for young people in care, carers and birth parents to explore the impact of the national lockdown on young people in and leaving care. The surveys ran for a month between June and July. In total there were 116 responses from young people, 302 from carers and 7 from the birth parents survey (geography of respondents is unknown). The results are not therefore representative. Key findings:

- Many young people and carers described how lockdown had given them more quality time to spend with families or those they live with; over 90% of those in foster care reported **relationships at home had improved or stayed the same** during lockdown.
- There were mixed views on **virtual family time**. While some felt it was a more flexible and convenient option which gave young people more control over the situation, the lack of physical contact was an issue for some, as was the additional responsibility this placed on foster carers to help manage family time.
- In respect of **virtual contact with social workers** / personal advisors, over 80% of young people and 90% of carers felt this was the same or better than their contact prior to lockdown, citing increased availability and convenience. However, some people felt there had been a reduction in the amount of contact, and this was particularly apparent for those who experienced a change of social worker over lockdown and did not have an opportunity to meet them.
- Experiences of **home-schooling were also mixed**, with some young people thriving due to the flexibility and one-to-one support from carers, and others struggling with the lack of routine and reduction in social contact. Carers also raised how the individualised attention supported some young people's learning; however some foster carers commented on the considerable responsibility and time commitments of home-schooling.

- The **wellbeing of children and young people** varied considerably over lockdown, with some enjoying the experience and increased free time, and others missing the structure of school and relationships with friends and family. Many reported looking forward to lockdown restrictions easing, while also hoping to maintain the increased quality time lockdown had given their families / households.

15.4 Young carers

[Kinship Response Six Month Report: The Impact on Kinship Carers](#) (England)

Source: Grandparents Plus

Date: 17 November 2020

Grandparents Plus has published an evaluation of the Kinship response programme to support kinship carers during the coronavirus pandemic between May and October. The service includes tailored advice, one-to-one support from project workers and peer-to-peer support. Findings from the programme's first six months (over the course of the pandemic) include that special guardians feel less isolated, less lonely, more confident in their role, and reported reduced concerns about their child's wellbeing. (It should be noted, however, that no detail is given of the methodology used or the number of participants involved in the evaluation).

15.5 Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) children and young people

[Emerging Evidence: Coronavirus and Children and Young People's Mental Health](#) (Issue 4) (International)

Source: Evidence Based Practice Unit

Date: 21 Oct 2020

This report – as described in Section 11 – reviewed recent international evidence (Jun-Jul) on the impact of the pandemic on sub-groups of children including BME children and young people (referred to as people of colour in the report). Key findings are:

- The report refers to data from the Kooth online mental service which we have reported on previously and suggests that the increased mental health risk for BME young people may be attributed to young people's awareness of the disproportionate impact of the Coronavirus on BME people.
- That said, evidence from America found that Asian American and Hispanic young people were less likely to report high levels of anxiety compared to White young people. The report notes that although ethnic identity, social networking and family cohesion might contribute to the lower rates of mental

health difficulties among these communities, under-recognition of psychological distress symptoms may also be the reason.

- Other US evidence continues to report a rise in discrimination against people Asian or Asian-American people owing to their race/ethnicity.

Understanding Society has published a briefing note on [Social Cohesion](#), highlighting the changes to social cohesion around the time of the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly among disadvantaged groups and communities. Whilst these findings do not relate to children and families directly, the influence of community on children's lives may be relevant. The report highlights:

- The percentage of people feeling positive about the relationships in their local neighbourhood was the lowest in June 2020, compared to 2011/12, 2014/15, and 2017/18.
- People from South Asian, Black and 'Other' ethnic minority background experienced larger declines in social cohesion around the time of the Covid-19 pandemic compared to those from a White British and Irish background. Both men and women, people across different age groups and economic activity groups experienced a similar decline in cohesion around the pandemic period.
- People living in the most deprived neighbourhoods reported lower levels of perceived social cohesion during the pandemic compared to those living in the least deprived neighbourhoods.
- The percentage of people from BAME backgrounds who reported that racial insults or attacks are 'very common' or 'fairly common' in their local area increased from 4% in 2014/15 to about 9% in June 2020 (after decreasing by about 2 percentage points between 2011/12 and 2014/15). Compared to White British respondents the percentage of BAME respondents who reported very/fairly common incidents of racial insults/ attacks remained relatively stable between 2011/12 and June 2020 at 2%.
- Among Ethnic Minorities who reported a negative change in social cohesion between 2014/15 and June 2020, 12% reported that racial insults/attacks were very or fairly common in their local area. This proportion was two times smaller (6%) among those who reported experiencing positive change in social cohesion.

YouGov published new analysis using its Debt Tracker on [the impacts of the pandemic on personal finances across the UK](#), showing the disproportionate impact on Britons from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) backgrounds.

- 45% of people from BAME communities say their personal finances have suffered as a result of the pandemic, compared with 34% of White respondents. Similar proportions say their households are now worse off (45% vs 35%), their disposable income has decreased (44% vs 35%), and state that

the pandemic has been bad for both their savings (40% vs 32%) and debts (26% vs 20%).

- The Debt Tracker data also suggests that people from BAME backgrounds are more likely to have seen their household income decrease as a consequence of the pandemic. While 63% of White people are certain that their household has not lost any income from the pandemic, this figure falls to 48% of people from BAME communities.
- Similarly, while 28% White people say their household has lost some or all of its income due to COVID-19, 36% of people from BAME backgrounds report the same.
- 28% people from BAME communities fear not affording food and clothes compared to 21% White people.

University College London (UCL) have shared new findings from their COVID-19 Social Study on [psychological impacts of the pandemic](#), highlighting that women and ethnic minorities have found the pandemic more challenging psychologically.

- **Women have found the Covid-19 pandemic more challenging than men psychologically**, reporting higher levels of depression, anxiety and loneliness, and lower levels of life satisfaction and happiness.
- Respondents from **BAME backgrounds also reported consistently worse mental health than other groups across every measure throughout the pandemic**, with higher levels of depression, anxiety, thoughts of death or self-harm, reported abuse and loneliness, and lower life satisfaction and happiness.
- Other groups at risk of higher depression and anxiety are young adults, people living alone, people with lower household incomes, those living with children and those living in urban areas. Levels of depression and anxiety are also higher among those with a long-term physical health condition and those with lower educational qualifications.
- The biggest stresses around Covid-19 differ amongst different groups.
 - Women and those with long-term physical health conditions are more worried about catching the virus or becoming seriously ill from it, at the start of lockdown women reported anxiety 53% higher, depression 30% higher, and life satisfaction 7% lower compared to men.
 - Those from BAME backgrounds were more concerned about losing their jobs and financial issues, as are those with higher educational qualifications. In the last month, levels of anxiety and depression persisted in being 30% and 15% higher amongst people from BAME backgrounds compared to people from white ethnic backgrounds on average and life satisfaction was 3% lower.
 -

15.6 Vulnerable children and young people

[Emerging Evidence: Coronavirus and Children and Young People's Mental Health \(Issue 4\) \(International\)](#)

Source: Evidence Based Practice Unit

Date: 21 Oct 2020

This report – as described in Section 11 – reviewed recent international evidence (Jun-Jul) on the impact of the pandemic on children and young people with **social care needs**. Key findings are:

- Evidence reports the challenges that practitioners working in early years education have experienced in identifying children who are “out of sight” when providing virtual services during lockdown - for example picking up on subtle signs of abuse.
- Other research reports low take up of early services which has exacerbated the challenges that vulnerable children and young people are experiencing e.g. taking on secondary worries from parents, difficulties in accessing support where mobility is impaired and – in more extreme cases – where abuses have been hidden at home.

[Online Safety: Instagram most Recorded Platform Used in Child Grooming Crimes During Lockdown](#) (England and Wales)

Source: NSPCC

Date: 13 November 2020

The NSPCC has released findings from Freedom of Information (FOI) responses from 38 police forces in England and Wales which shows that 1,220 offences of sexual communication with a child were recorded in the first 3 months of lockdown. Figures show that, where the platform was recorded, Instagram was used in 37% of cases while Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp combined were used in 51% of cases and Snapchat was used in 20% of cases. The research shows that offences have also increased annually in the 3 years before lockdown. In total there were 12,925 offences recorded by police in England and Wales from April 2017 to March 2020, with experts saying poorly designed social media sites are putting children at risk.

15.7 Domestic abuse and violence against women and girls

As previously reported, the [University of College \(UCL\) COVID Study](#) reports regularly on domestic abuse. The findings for [week 32-33](#) (published 5 Nov) show

that self-reported abuse (physical and psychological) continues to be fairly stable. It is reported to be slightly higher in people living with children compared to those living with just other adults (under 10% for all groups). Abuse has also been higher amongst people with long-term, physical health conditions and people from BAME backgrounds. However, it should be noted that not all people who are experiencing abuse will necessarily report it, so these levels are anticipated to be an under-estimation of actual levels.

15.8 LGBTQ+ and non-binary children and young people

Emerging Evidence: Coronavirus and Children and Young People's Mental Health (Issue 4) (International)

Source: Evidence Based Practice Unit

Date: 21 Oct 2020

This report – as described in Section 11 – reviewed recent international evidence (Jun-Jul) on the impact of the pandemic on sub-groups of children including LGBTQ+ and non-binary young people. Key findings are:

- As we have previously reported, there is emerging evidence on how the mental health challenges of the pandemic may be disproportionately affecting LGBTQ+ young people. The report suggests that a **loss of safe spaces** and LGBTQ+ youth support organisations during the pandemic may have made this group more vulnerable to the current crisis. Difficulties in accessing services is also reported internationally.
- There is some evidence that young people who identify as transgender and gender queer may be disproportionately impacted by the **mental health** challenges of the pandemic. For example, there is some emerging US evidence that young transgender men were more likely to report high levels of PTSD symptoms than other genders. This may be in part due to being more isolated from peer networks, rather than the immediate family with whom they are in lockdown.
- Amongst young people (11-25 years) who access online mental health support from Kooth in the UK (reported in previous Children & Families Briefings), many have reported issues with their gender identity under lockdown with a sizeable increase in gender struggles compared to the previous year.

15.9 Children and young people impacted by the justice system

[A Thematic Review of the Work of Youth Offending Services during the COVID-19 Pandemic](#) (England and Wales)

Source: Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation

Date: 18 November 2020

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation has published a thematic review of the work of youth offending services in England and Wales during the coronavirus pandemic. A survey of seven youth offending teams finds that youth court closures due to the pandemic have almost doubled, with the backlog of children awaiting court increasing by 55% by the end of June 2020 compared with the same period in the previous year. The closure of courts has meant that some children have spent longer on remand than would normally be expected.

16. Impact on services

The [UNICEF Report](#) discussed above in Section 9 describes some of wider international evidence about effective interventions to support children's wellbeing during epidemics/disasters e.g. parenting programmes.

[Engaging Young People during the COVID-19 Pandemic \(Insights Brief #1\)](#) (England and Wales)

Source: Dartington Service Design Lab, Centre for Youth Impact, Research in Practice and University of Plymouth

Date: 2020

This Brief is based on a literature review on engaging young people in services and the experiences of more than 100 organisations that have been funded by the Youth Endowment Fund's (YEF) £6.4m COVID-19 Learning Project (data drawn from grant applications, workshops and interviews). It is written for organisations delivering services for vulnerable young people. The grant aimed to provide targeted support to young people at risk of being involved in violence; and to learn fast about the **best ways to reach vulnerable young people with social distancing**. Key messages are summarised below:

- Flexibility - The best way to use these approaches is to be flexible. Use different methods together, personalise your responses based on what young people tell you and start small by piloting new activities.
- Engagement approaches - There are lots of ways to engage young people during the pandemic. Which ones will work best depends on the needs of the

young people supported by organisations and the situations they're facing. The briefing outlines how to best use online and remote approaches, detached and street-based youth work, outdoor activities and support for young people's basic needs.

- Partnership working - Partnering with families, schools, community organisations and statutory services can support successful engagement.
- Use existing relationships - Each of these partnerships may work better with some young people than others. However, applying one common principle can help: using relationships that organisations already have with partners and young people. It's easier to build on trust that's been established.

17. Scope, limitations and further information

This briefing document is intended to provide information and raise awareness on current and emerging published evidence on the impacts of COVID-19 on children and young people, including those with vulnerabilities and/or those experiencing disadvantage.

Research scope and limitations

The scope of these briefings is very broad to cover a range of policy interests. It covers a non-systematic selection of evidence sources from Scotland and other parts of the UK published in October and November (mostly). In the main, the following topics are excluded:

- Early years (0-2) and maternity;
- Most aspects of physical health, in particular COVID-19 infection and transmission in children and young people;
- A detailed coverage of the impact of COVID-19 on education and learning.

Please note there are limitations to the conclusions that can be drawn from the evidence presented, for the following reasons:

- Much of the survey data lacks robust comparability to pre-lockdown baseline data due to questions asked or data collection changes.
- Few studies have used validated self-report measures e.g. of mental wellbeing (e.g. WEMWBS, SDQ).
- Results from different surveys and sources will not be comparable given the different sampling approaches, timing, jurisdiction and questions used in each survey.
- Changes in the different government guidance and legislation over the course of the pandemic and within different parts of the UK, as well as differences in restrictions within Scotland since the introduction of the level system are also likely to impact on results.

This briefing is not an exhaustive overview nor a critical appraisal or endorsement of the quality of research. A rapid review of academic literature is outwith the scope of this briefing.

Please note that some of these summaries have been drawn from the NSPCC Learning series updates (CASPAR weekly update) and the Care Inspectorate Children and Young People Bulletin series which readers may wish to subscribe to.

Other briefings available in this series:

[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): impact on children, young people and families - evidence summary June 2020](#)

[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): impact on children, young people and families - evidence summary July 2020](#)

[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): impact on children, young people and families - evidence summary September](#)

[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): impact on children, young people and families - evidence summary October 2020](#)

Children and Families Analytical Unit, Scottish Government

© Crown copyright 2020

You may re-use this information (excluding logos and images) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence.

To view this licence, visit <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/> or e-mail: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

Where we have identified any third party copyright information you will need to obtain permission from the copyright holders concerned.

The views expressed in this report are those of the researcher and do not necessarily represent those of the Scottish Government or Scottish Ministers.

This document is also available from our website at www.gov.scot.

ISBN: 978-1-80004-482-1

The Scottish Government
St Andrew's House
Edinburgh
EH1 3DG

Produced for
the Scottish Government
by APS Group Scotland
PPDAS808326 (01/21)
Published by
the Scottish Government,
December 2020

Social Research series
ISSN 2045-6964
ISBN 978-1-80004-482-1

Web Publication
www.gov.scot/socialresearch

PPDAS808326 (01/21)

